Professor Profile:
Dr. Marian Eide

Coming Out
Monologues &
Inclusive Aggie
Identity

Student Orgs
for English
Majors
We talked with Aleyda Solis-Cano, a former student and current English teacher at Cypress Ridge High School in CFISD. Solis completed her undergraduate degree in English and also got her Master of Education degree from Texas A&M and has been teaching for five and a half years.

Q: Did you always want to be a teacher?
A: Yes and no. I recently found a letter to myself that I'd in elementary school— I don't know what class it was for or when I wrote it specifically—but we had to write about where we saw ourselves in 10 years. I wrote that I was going to be a teacher. It was something that I wanted to do at an early age, and I felt like I changed, but then I went back into it. Actually, when I came into A&M, I was a biology major, but after a while, I realized where my strengths were, and I switched to English.

Q: What is your favorite part about teaching?
A: For me, my favorite part is being with the students, being a positive influence on them, leading them, and being that person that believes in them. I really had great teachers growing up that believed in me, and I feel like that's part of the reason why I am where I am.

Q: What are some of the challenges that you face in teaching?
A: I think at the beginning, it was a matter of learning what the expectations were for teachers. I came in thinking that my responsibility was to teach, but there's a whole lot more to teaching. There's also classroom management, learning how to work in a team, and effectively sharing your ideas.

Q: Do you have any advice for current English students that are considering being a teacher after graduation?
A: I feel like teaching, you just really need to get yourself in the classroom. Observation is going to give you a feel, but when you're the teacher, it's a whole different experience. I would say to try it out, and even try it out for more than a year because usually that first year is a little difficult. It takes a while to be the best teacher you can be, but it is definitely worthwhile. The beauty of teaching is that every day is a new opportunity for you and your students. If something doesn't go as planned, you can start fresh the next day.

Q: Do you feel like your undergraduate and graduate education at Texas A&M prepared you for being a teacher? Were you well-equipped going into the field of teaching?
A: I feel like it definitely did help me, especially my master's degree in combination with my English degree. Since I was just majoring in English, I didn't really have a feel for the education aspect, so the Master of Education program really helped me out in learning how to create lesson plans, how to use applications that will make student learning more engaging, and how to assess student learning. I feel like it was really helpful.

To read the full article with Aleyda Solis-Cano, and other articles featuring possible career paths for English students, visit The English Aggie blog: www.englishaggie.blogspot.com.
How the Coming Out Monologues, an event started by a former English student more than 10 years ago, continues to highlight LGBTQ+ stories to promote an inclusive Aggie narrative

The stage lights shine. A hush falls over the audience. Performers await their cue. Unlike typical plays, the performance about to begin will profoundly impact the audience members and performers, alike. This is the Coming Out Monologues. Hosted around the country by numerous college campuses, this event usually takes place in early April at Texas A&M University to celebrate LGBTQ+ Awareness Month. According to Texas A&M’s LGBTQ+ Pride Center, the experience is “raw, inspiring, transformative, and intimate.”

TheComingOutMonologueswasoriginallywrittencobytracyTubbs,acollegetatianwhograduatedfromTexasA&MwithadegreeinEnglish.Shestartedtheeventwhileshewass the coordinator for University of California-Riverside’s LGBTQ+ Resource Center. The first Coming Out Monologues was held in 2010 on UC-Riverside’s campus. The event’s concept was inspired by The Vagina Monologues, an episodic prose reading by Eve Ensler, and was intended to give LGBTQ+ students a platform to share authentic stories to amplify LGBTQ+ voices.

Inclusivity and the Aggie Narrative

The first Coming Out Monologues event on Texas A&M’s campus was performed around 10 years ago, and since then, the event has grown substantially. The LGBTQ+ Pride Center now supports efforts to put on the event every year, and the event has received external support, including from the Department of English. Last year’s performance was virtual due to COVID-19 safety concerns, as will be this year’s performance. Directors of the event hope to return to Rudder Theater, where it was originally located, as soon as next year.

Dr. Kris May from the Department of English currently serves as a Co-Director for the event, along with Dr. Jesse O’Rear from the Department of Performance Studies. To Dr. May, who also performed in the first Coming Out Monologues event at Texas A&M 10 years ago, the event is important to promoting inclusivity on campus.

“The Coming Out Monologues is a way to bring visibility and attention to the LGBTQ+ population here. Something that the students who work with the Coming Out Monologues are invested in saying is ‘I really am an Aggie, this is who I am, and I don’t fit into these boxes and stereotypes,’” Dr. May said. “They really want to make ‘Aggie’ a more inclusive term.”

Dr. May says this event, which is one of the most visible LGBTQ+ events on campus, focuses on stories that are potentially hidden or overlooked.

“People who have felt like they’ve never been able to share their stories or have not been encouraged to share their stories, they can enter this space with the Coming Out Monologues where their story is appreciated. They realize that they do have something to say and their stories are valuable,” Dr. May said.

Center Stage

While the performers at the Coming Out Monologues are generally LGBTQ+ students, being a student is not a prerequisite to performing. Past performers have included LGBTQ+ alumni, faculty, staff, community members, and friends and family who are LGBTQ+ allies seeking to learn more about how to support their loved ones.

According to Dr. May, the Coming Out Monologues is for anyone with a story, no matter how complicated it may seem.

“I think any LGBTQ+ person, any and all of them, have stories. Anyone who is or has struggled with some issues [with their identity], and maybe aren’t LGBTQ+, but are trying to figure it out...has an important story to tell,” Dr. May added, “Allies who have stories that involve LGBTQ+ people, and how they’ve supported them...that’s part of the overall story as well.”

Performances in past Coming Out Monologues events have included poetry readings, prose readings, drug performances, dances, or art presentations.

All of these stories are not only a mechanism for performers to process and articulate their struggle, pride, or otherwise emotional journey tied to their identity—it’s also highly impactful for audience members as well. In Dr. May’s experience co-directing the event, there have been multiple students who were inspired to perform because they participated as an audience member in a previous year.

“Something that’s always really noticeable to me, even in the early days, is after the performance walking around and hearing people’s conversations as they’re leaving or as they’re coming up to meet the performers—it really makes an impression on so many of the audience members,” Dr. May said.

Developing the Story

As Co-Directors of the Coming Out Monologues, Dr. May and Dr. O’Rear conduct multiple workshops throughout the academic year to help students refine their pieces before submitting a final version to perform. According to Dr. May, the benefits of the writing process and reading different perspectives in literature can be essential for students grappling for insight into who they are and how they define their identity.

“Just the process of writing and telling your story can give those moments where you have some incredible insights about yourself.”

For people who have felt like they’re different from you, but yet you don’t fit into these boxes, or this makes that really meaningful. Some aspects might be completely different from you, but yet you still may have an identity with that character in the book or writer, so you’re broadening your horizon.”

While Dr. May helps students write their pieces to submit to the Coming Out Monologues, he also stresses that students who don’t write pieces will still perform.

“Performances can start with a photo, maybe a photo you took. It could start with a self-portrait or any piece of artwork that you’ve done, a piece of music that you’ve performed that maybe you didn’t write,” Dr. May said. “Some people are intimidated or nervous about putting words down, but those can be another person’s words, or they don’t have to be words, and you could start with just an image.”

Working with students to develop these stories is a task that Dr. May finds very rewarding. According to him, the success of the Coming Out Monologues can be entirely attributed to the hard work of the LGBTQ+ Pride Center, and the students who participate in the event.

“It’s a really exciting process for me to see and hear every year. There’s always something that’s surprising. It’s great to see those new things come through every year,” he said.

This year’s performance of the Coming Out Monologues will take place virtually on Zoom on April 2nd. To learn more about the details of this year’s Coming Out Monologues performance and to find ways to become involved in future performances, please visit the LGBTQ+ Pride Center’s website.

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Note: this is not an exhaustive list. There are hundreds of student organizations at Texas A&M, and these are just a few that might interest English majors. To find more student organizations that share your interests, go to stuactonline.tamu.edu.

**The Eckleburg Project**

**About:**
The official undergraduate literary journal at Texas A&M University.

**What current members say:**

“Being part of The Eckleburg Project has been one of the best parts of my time at Texas A&M. I found some wonderful friends and an outlet for my creativity. I also made some great memories along the way!”

- Ashley Zbylot, Staff Writer

Learn more:

- Instagram: @tamu.odyssey
- Website: theeckleburgproject.com

**Creative Writing Techniques Club**

**About:**
A place where creative writers of any kind can improve their technical skills.

**What current members say:**

“It’s always hard to find beta readers dedicated and unbiased enough to trust with your writing, and CWTC has an endless source of just that. Anyone who wants to improve their creative writing skills in any way is welcome and will be met with many helpful listeners.”

- Ryan Kulcak, President

Learn more:

- Instagram: @CWTC
- Email: theeckleburgproject@gmail.com
- Website: theeckleburgproject.com

**Odyssey**

**About:**
Odyssey is a Texas A&M organization that is based in New York. We are a group of writers who believe in amplifying multiple perspectives, opinions, and ideas— including yours.

**What current members say:**

“Being a part of Odyssey has not only been a highlight of my present time in college but has also illuminated key goals in my professional and personal future. While in this community of world-shakers and word-makers, I’ve discovered my voice in my writing.”

- Riley Farrell, Editor-in-Chief

Learn more:

- Instagram: @tamu.odyssey
- Website: hercampus.com/school/tamu

**Aggie Book Club**

**About:**
Aggie Book Club is a place for readers to meet and discuss different topics related to literature. ABC welcomes all readers and book lovers!

**What current members say:**

“I love Aggie Book Club because not only do I get to explore different forms of literature, I also get to talk about them with others that enjoy books just as much as I do!”

- Caitlyn Tomaselli, Vice President

Learn more:

- Instagram: @aggiebookclub
- Website: hercampus.com/school/tamu

**Her Campus**

**About:**
The Texas A&M chapter of the online collegiate women’s magazine, Her Campus, that forms a tight-knit community of like-minded creatives.

**What current members say:**

“I am so thankful for Her Campus and the impact it’s had on my college experience. I’ve been exposed to the world of journalism, marketing, PR, and social media through this organization. I feel that I’ve strengthened my communication skills in so many ways! Besides career help, I’ve made a ton of friends and am so thankful to have them in my life!”

- Nadia Garcia, President

Learn more:

- Instagram: @aggiebookclub
- Website: hercampus.com/school/tamu

**Editor’s Note**

Making the Case: Getting Involved

As a freshman, I heard it all the time: “You get out of it what you put into it.” As a senior, I know now that this was one of the most important pieces of advice I received coming into college. So, how did I put in all of the rewarding experiences, meaningful accomplishments, and unforgettable memories that I hoped to get out of my college experience? Great question. It starts with getting involved.

Like most freshman students, I didn’t know exactly what I wanted to do after I walked across the graduation stage. However, I did know what I loved, and that was English, especially if it related to reading, writing, and publishing. Using my passion for English as a guiding light, I applied to be a part of the undergraduate literary magazine here at Texas A&M, *The Eckleburg Project*. Two years later, I became the Editor-in-Chief of that organization, and I played a direct role in telling students’ stories—one of my most rewarding experiences in college. The memories I made and the goals I accomplished while in that leadership position were unforgettable and truly enriched my college experience. I don’t know where I’d be if I didn’t apply.

I want every undergraduate student who enrolls at Texas A&M to have the same experience. I don’t mean by joining the same club or playing the same sport as me. I mean the same enrichment, gratification and connection to the university and the student body. I believe those feelings can only be replicated by becoming involved outside of the classroom. Whether that’s applying to be a part of the literary magazine or other student publication, volunteering off-campus, working a part-time student worker job at an office they enjoy, or even starting their own organization if they can’t find one that fits them, everyone who wants to should find the place where they can make a difference, no matter how big or small.

If students seek out these opportunities, the benefits that come out of that will last forever (not to mention make for great talking material during job interviews). So do it! Join an organization. You never know what you might get out of it.
Share Your Story!

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@theenglishaggie

Use our hashtag
#theenglishaggie

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